

Montana Senate Bill 221 - Companion Animal Hoarding  
Proponent Testimony by Linda Metzger  
January 23, 2009

***Companion animal hoarding*** is: Repeatedly keeping more pet animals than one can properly care for, resulting in the animals' suffering. A hoarder denies the deleterious effects her/his hoarding behavior has on the animals, the hoarder, other household members, neighbors, and the community. Hoarders have a near-100% recidivism rate.

- In 2002-2003, the Lethcoe-Harman hoarding case cost Toole County **\$166,000** in animal care alone, not including law enforcement and prosecution expenses. Hundreds of volunteers donated their labor, and donations from people around the country covered the animal care of this high-profile case, so that Toole County was able to donate **\$12,000** to Cascade County for the Polejewski/Hanson hoarding case.
- From 2005-present, the Polejewski/Hanson hoarding case cost Cascade County **\$30,414** in animal care alone, not including six weeks of around-the-clock deputy surveillance of the property, county road equipment use and labor, prosecution costs, and ongoing lawsuit defense costs. Hundreds of volunteers donated their labor. The total cost to the county is around **\$100,000**. Subsequently, Polejewski has filed a lawsuit against Cascade County for **\$47 million** and is appealing her cruelty conviction to the Montana Supreme Court. Hanson has filed a lawsuit against the Cascade County Sheriff's Office. Defending these lawsuits will raise the county's insurance premiums. The successful public nuisance civil suit brought by seventeen neighbors against Polejewski/Hanson, which was affirmed by the Montana Supreme Court, cost them **\$8,500** in legal fees, **\$1,600** in expenses, and hundreds of hours of volunteered paralegal and investigative work.
- Currently a hoarding case is being prosecuted in Yellowstone County. In just the first three weeks, the animal care costs have already surpassed those of Polejewski/Hanson.

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